

# Risk Adjustment Coding Academy- Coding Focus

## Neoplasms – An Overview



The term neoplasm refers to an abnormal growth of tissue that occurs when cells divide more than they should or when cells do not die as they should. Neoplasms, sometimes referred to as tumors, are classified mainly by site and then further distinguished based upon their behavior. The two main designations are malignant (or cancerous) and benign (or non-cancerous)<sup>1</sup>.

### Malignant Neoplasms

Malignant neoplasms are tumors which are usually irregularly shaped and have poorly differentiated cells that grow or invade other areas and metastasize. Malignant primary neoplasms refer to cancerous tumors that originated within the anatomical site. Malignant secondary neoplasms refer to cancerous tumors that spread to a new site from a primary site. When this occurs, the primary cancer is said to be metastatic<sup>2</sup>. For example, lung cancer metastatic to the bone has a primary site of the lung which has now spread to the secondary location of the bone.

Another malignant neoplasm type is an early stage of cancer known as in situ. Cancer in situ means that the abnormal

cells are only found in the place where they first formed and have not spread<sup>3</sup>.

### Benign and Other Neoplasms

Benign neoplasms are tumors that have been determined to be noncancerous. They are localized and have limited potential to grow or invade as well as having well differentiated cells. Some common types of benign neoplasms are adenomas, lipomas and hemangiomas.

When the behavior of a tumor cannot be predicted through pathology, it is called a neoplasm of uncertain behavior. These are neoplasms which are currently benign but have characteristics that make it possible for the tumor to become malignant.

One final category is available for unspecified neoplasm, which is used when pathology has not yet determined the specific behavior of the neoplasm.

### Coding Guidance

There are multiple diagnosis code possibilities for neoplasms, which are based on anatomical site or location and behavior. In ICD-9-CM, neoplasm codes were found in chapter 2 of the tabular index, under the following code categories<sup>4</sup>:

- 140-199 Malignant neoplasms, primary or secondary by site
- 200-208 Malignant neoplasms of lymphatic and hematopoietic tissue
- 209 Neuroendocrine tumors
- 210-229 Benign neoplasms
- 230-234 Carcinoma in situ
- 235-238 Neoplasm of uncertain behavior
- 239 Neoplasms unspecified

In ICD-10-CM, neoplasms are located in chapter 2 of the tabular index, under the following code categories<sup>5</sup>:

- C00-C96 Malignant neoplasms, primary or secondary by site
- D00-D09 In situ neoplasms
- D10-D36, D3A Benign neoplasm
- D37-D38 Neoplasms uncertain behavior, polycythemia vera and myelodysplastic syndromes
- D49 Neoplasms unspecified behavior

In addition to the tabular index, both ICD-9-CM and ICD-10-CM contain a neoplasm table that provides a listing of neoplasms by site, which can then be cross referenced by the aforementioned behavior types. As always, accurate medical record documentation is essential for correct diagnosis code assignment.

### Resources:

<sup>1</sup> National Cancer Institute (n.d.) NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms. Retrieved November 28, 2016 from cancer.gov

<sup>2</sup> National Cancer Institute (n.d.) Metastatic Cancer. Retrieved November 28, 2016 from cancer.gov

<sup>3</sup> Cancer Treatment Centers of America (2015). Cancer in Situ. Retrieved November 28, 2016 from cancercenter.com

<sup>4</sup> Hart, A. C., Stegman, M. S., & Ford, B. (2011). ICD-9-CM for physicians, volumes 1 & 2: 2012 professional: International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, Clinical Modification. Eden Prairie, MN: OptumInsight.

<sup>5</sup> Anita Schmidt, K.K., & P.W. (2016). ICD-10-CM Expert for Physicians. Optum360